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General Assembly

Official Records

Disarmament Commission
280th meeting
Tuesday, 10 April 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Rosselli ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before calling on the first speaker on my list, I will ask the Secretary to make two announcements.

Mr. Alasaniya (Secretary of the Commission): I have been asked to make the following announcements. First, I would like to remind delegates that the survey on the United Nations Disarmament Yearbook, which was distributed earlier, is still in force. We are asking delegates who have not yet done so to fill them out. They will be collected at the end of today's meeting.

Another announcement concerns the screening on Wednesday 11 April in the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium at 1 p.m. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific and the Office for Disarmament Affairs would like to remind delegates of the screening of the film "Hiroshima: Ground Zero". By the way, Mr. Masa Kitanabe, a survivor of Hiroshima and producer of the film, will be available for discussions with the audience.

Mr. Vila Coma (Andorra) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Chairman, first of all, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for this year. I also congratulate the Chairmen of the two Working Groups.

Andorra is a country without an army that has lived in peace for more than seven centuries. It does not produce or export weapons. Its devotion to peace is more than obvious, and that makes us very proud. This is why our country defends disarmament and would like to express its great concern at the lack of political will to implement agreements on disarmament and on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

This new session gives us an opportunity to evaluate the work done at the first session of the triennial cycle. It gives us the chance to take into account different points of view on nuclear disarmament and on confidence-building measures in all these areas. We hope that this session will produce concrete results and precise recommendations leading to an efficient outcome.

Andorra also welcomes the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/257, which supports the appointment of a representative of the Secretary-General as head of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, giving this matter priority. Let us not spare any efforts as we negotiate a consensus leading to effectiveness. The world needs this more than ever to stop the drift towards an arms race, which constitutes a real threat to international peace and security.

Sir, allow me to reiterate our full support for the work of this Commission. We think the Commission is a useful tool to help us make real strides toward the consolidation of international peace and security.

Mr. Hill (Australia): There can be no doubt that the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) is among the gravest threats confronting the international community.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The international security environment has changed markedly since the end of the cold war. Globalization has increased the opportunities for States to acquire or develop WMDs. Moreover, with the rise of transnational terrorism, we confront the possibility of terrorists fulfilling their desire to obtain and use WMDs. In this complex global environment, Government strategies must be multidimensional, making full use of the range of tools developed to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Australia is a strong supporter of multilateral approaches to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. The major treaties, including the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and measures such as Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), are central to maintaining shared international standards in this area. We also strongly support practical measures that reinforce the multilateral treaties, such as the export control regimes. Australia readily embraced the Proliferation Security Initiative as an important means to strengthen international cooperation on combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we are pleased that support for the Initiative continues to grow. We encourage those States that have not expressed support for the initiative to look again at the practical ways in which it can contribute to the security of us all.

In July 2006, Australia accepted an invitation to join the United States-Russian Federation-led Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism as an inaugural member. Members have adopted a work plan which includes the Asia-Pacific seminar on combating nuclear terrorism, a regional outreach meeting which Australia will host in Sydney in May of this year.

Like others, Australia considers that balanced and progressive steps towards nuclear disarmament are vital to the continued political strength and vitality of the NPT. But we should be clear that the burden of responsibility is not that of the nuclear-weapon States alone. All States must contribute by ensuring an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament. A world free of nuclear weapons will not be achieved without complete and permanent assurances of non-proliferation.

Of serious concern in this context are the cases of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Iran has committed serious violations of its NPT nuclear safeguards obligations and is continuing development of its uranium enrichment programme in defiance of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors and the Security Council. Iran must comply with the IAEA Board and Security Council resolutions, including by suspending all uranium enrichment-related activities.

Australia strongly condemns the nuclear weapon test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in October 2006. However, Australia joined many others in welcoming the statement released on 13 February following the Six-Party Talks in Beijing, which commits the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to move quickly to begin resolving the serious international concerns over its nuclear programme. We look forward to North Korea matching its commitments with practical action.

We should have no doubt that the cases of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are not just a challenge for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. They also detract from the environment of confidence essential for progress on nuclear disarmament.

Australia remains committed to addressing the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons through the United Nations Programme of Action. In addition to national measures to curb small arms and light weapons proliferation, we will continue to provide practical assistance to affected States in our region. However, cooperation at the international level is essential if we are to stem the flow of illicit weapons and reduce their devastating impact on peoples' lives.

Despite the enormous efforts of States to rid the world of anti-personnel landmines, they continue to pose a huge humanitarian threat and a barrier to development. As current President of the Mine Ban Convention, Australia has strived to promote the universalization and implementation of the Convention through its President's action plan. In 2007, Australia will support anti-personnel landmine clearance, survivor assistance and mine risk education in Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Angola and Uganda.

Australia, like other countries, is concerned about the potential threat to international civil aviation posed by the acquisition and use of shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles or man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) by terrorist and other non-State groups.

In cooperation with others, Australia is playing a leading role in international efforts to counter the proliferation of these weapons. As Chair of the Wassenaar Arrangement Plenary in 2006, Australia conducted outreach on MANPADS to selected non-Wassenaar countries. Australia continues to work bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally to help counter the illicit proliferation of MANPADS. Our approach includes efforts to enhance coordination of regional capacity-building assistance activities to help strengthen MANPADS export controls and stockpile management practices, and helping Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) economies with their 2005 Busan commitment to undertake MANPADS airport vulnerability assessments.

Australia believes that the irresponsible or illicit transfer of conventional arms and their components is of such grave and pressing concern that the problem can be adequately addressed only through the establishment of a legally binding treaty. Australia was proud to be one of the co-authors of General Assembly resolution 61/89, on an arms trade treaty, and welcomes the overwhelming majority which supported the resolution at the sixty-first session of the Assembly. We encourage all States to respond to the Secretary-General by 30 April with views on the scope, feasibility and parameters of an arms trade treaty.

The issues discussed in this forum bear on the security interests of all States. They are too important for all Commission members not to embrace this opportunity to make practical and pragmatic contributions to address contemporary challenges. We therefore look forward to the Commission developing practical recommendations for achieving the objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and making meaningful progress towards agreement on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission, and to assure you of my delegation's full support in accomplishing your duties. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou and Mr. Carlos Sergio Sobral Duarte, Chairmen of Working Groups I on nuclear questions and II on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons respectively, for the quality of the work undertaken since last year. In this regard, my delegation would like to say at the outset that the documents presented by the Chairmen of Working Groups I and II are a good basis for our work to achieve, we would hope, a consensus as soon as possible.

Finally, my country associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of the Sudan on behalf of the African Group.

The Kingdom of Morocco was very pleased to see that in 2006 the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission were back on track after several years of paralysis. I venture to hope that this year's session will allow us to consolidate the gains of 2006 and to make significant progress on the two substantive items on the Commission's agenda. That would send a positive message to the international community and would give reason for hope with respect to reinvigorating the multilateral disarmament system, which we have been trying to do for 10 years, but, unfortunately, without great success up to now.

The purpose of the Disarmament Commission is to engage in deliberations. It is our job to adopt recommendations or guidelines to be conveyed to the General Assembly. We are not negotiating international conventions or treaties. That is why it seems essential to us that all delegations here should show the necessary flexibility, making a good-faith commitment to negotiations to finalize clear guidelines on each of the two items, based on clear and easily identifiable principles.

Working Group I, mandated to consider recommendations in order to implement nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, has carried out a great deal of work, trying to canvass all existing positions on a subject that is complex and often controversial. We believe that it would be desirable to work on the basis of the views that were expressed, as reflected in the Chair's document, with a view to identifying clear general principles in the form of recommendations. In our view, such general principles could be based on the following ideas.

First, there is a need to reiterate the importance of multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. That requires a revitalization of the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission, as well as a revitalization of existing major international instruments.

In that respect, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains of fundamental importance to international peace and security. The balance set out by the NPT in terms of the rights and obligations of all must be safeguarded. The right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy; strict compliance by non-nuclear States with their obligations in the area of non-proliferation; and the need for the nuclear Powers to engage in negotiations in order to achieve general and complete disarmament are the fundamental principles on which the international legal regime was founded. That legal regime must be respected and strengthened through multilateral action, which is the only way of ensuring the achievement of tangible progress.

Secondly, in 1996 the international community took an important step by concluding the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Morocco, which is a party to that Treaty, deems it necessary once again to reiterate the fundamental importance of a complete ban on nuclear tests and of strict compliance with the Treaty's provisions. Nuclear tests promote not only the proliferation of nuclear weapons but also the increased sophistication and modernization of existing arsenals. It is therefore urgent to reiterate the importance of the full and effective entry into force of the CTBT.

Thirdly, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones must be promoted. That topic has been debated at length in the Commission in the past. Africa has shown the way in that respect by making the continent a nuclear-weapon-free zone through the Pelindaba Treaty. We hope that that example will be followed in other regions, in particular in those that are facing significant tensions, such as the Middle East.

Fourthly, the international legal regime in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation must be strengthened through the conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Fifthly, the issue of nuclear terrorism requires urgent action. The threat of terrorist groups using nuclear devices or radioactive materials in a large urban centre is a frightening prospect. The international community must mobilize to avert such an occurrence, which, if it were to take place, would have tragic consequences not only in terms of loss of human life but also with respect to the environmental damage that could result from such a terrorist attack.

Morocco, mindful of what is at stake in that regard, hosted, on the basis of an initiative by the Group of Eight, an international meeting at Rabat on 30 and 31 October 2006. That meeting, which took place in the framework of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, yielded a statement of principles aimed mainly at developing partnership capacity to combat nuclear terrorism on a determined and systematic basis and to prevent the trafficking of nuclear materials and substances.

Sixthly and finally, the problem of the proliferation of delivery systems must be carefully considered. Morocco, which is currently chairing the group of States that have subscribed to The Hague Code of Conduct on the proliferation of ballistic missiles, recalls once again the need to promote all of the objectives contained in the Code and to combat the proliferation of delivery systems, which is a source of certain danger for international security.

With respect to specific confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons, as considered by Working Group II on the basis of the documents submitted by the Chair, several key principles should guide our thinking.

First, we must keep in mind the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, which must guide the actions of all Member States: the non-use of force in international relations, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

My country remains convinced that regional and international disputes must be resolved in a peaceful manner through dialogue and negotiations. Innovative and creative solutions must be promoted to resolve regional disputes.

Secondly, global military expenditures are reaching unprecedented levels. The major confidence-building measure in the area of conventional weapons must be a reduction in military expenditures and the promotion at the national level of policies aimed at

promoting human development and the achievement of socio-economic objectives.

Thirdly, conventional weapons have a destructive effect on many civilian populations, particularly in developing countries. A sustained international effort must be made to combat proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Appropriate follow-up of the 2001 Programme of Action, following the failure in 2006 of the Review Conference, must be undertaken. An international instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons was concluded. We support the conclusion of an international instrument on brokering, and we would consider any measure that would strengthen the establishment of confidence-building measures in that area.

In the wake of the numerous failures we have witnessed in the past few years in the disarmament field at the United Nations, it is vital that the Disarmament Commission lead the way and that we make progress in achieving the objectives that we have set for ourselves. We no longer have the right to fail.

My delegation reiterates its hope that truly multilateral negotiations will take place during this session that will allow us to finalize the recommendations that the Commission will be transmitting to the General Assembly.

The complexity and sensitivity of the questions under review should not discourage us. We have an obligation to the international community to achieve results, and we remain optimistic with respect to the success of the work of the Commission.

Mr. Dev Pant (Nepal): Mr. Chairman, it is a pleasure to see you presiding over the 2007 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission. I am confident that, with your wisdom and consummate diplomatic skill, you will be able to steer the session to a successful conclusion. I also wish to felicitate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairmen of the Working Groups.

My delegation fully endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I would like also to thank the Secretary-General for his enlightening remarks at the opening of the session yesterday.

It is heartening that the Commission will continue to consider two very significant thematic issues during the current cycle, namely "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons", and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons". My delegation believes that the Commission, as a deliberative forum, should strive to build on the spirit that led to consensus last year on the agenda items and utilize prudently the time allocated for the meetings in forging common ground, with a view to generating momentum towards achieving the shared goals of international peace and security through disarmament and non-proliferation.

The existence of nuclear weapons, including other weapons of mass destruction, remains a persistent threat to all humankind. The fact that the world has a stockpile of thousands of tons of highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium, which are enough to produce more than 100,000 nuclear weapons, is a stark reminder that international peace and security is in a state of absolute crisis.

Further, the series of setbacks that have faced the multilateral disarmament bodies — from the Conference on Disarmament to the Disarmament Commission to the 2006 Small Arms Review Conference — are ominous developments. The fact that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was unable to adopt a final document and that the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document did not contain anything substantive on the subject of disarmament and non-proliferation speaks volumes about the state of affairs prevailing in the field of disarmament in general.

When the Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968, hopes were high that, while nuclear-weapon States would gradually cut down on their nuclear arsenals, non-nuclear-weapon States would desist from acquiring them. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 Review Conference provided an added sense of optimism in the context of promises made by the nuclear-weapon States, but unfortunately the commitments made at that time have hardly been translated into tangible actions. It is therefore in the interests of all that the current state of inertia come to an end.

As a State party to the NPT, Nepal remains fully convinced that the Treaty provides the fundamental basis for nuclear disarmament and serves as an

important instrument for curbing the vertical and horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons. It has been our principled position that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons will provide an absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. As an interim measure, early initiatives are needed for the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear weapon States.

While we believe that preserving the sanctity of that multilateral Treaty is a precondition for achieving the goal of disarmament and non-proliferation, nuclear-weapon States and those with nuclear capabilities should set an example by acceding to the Treaty.

We strongly believe that the proposed fissile material cut-off treaty must be concluded in earnest and that the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must at the same time be strengthened so as to reinforce the existing verification mechanism for the non-proliferation regime. It has become all the more urgent to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The trend in the global trade in conventional weapons is equally alarming. As the largest consumers, developing countries, including many least developed countries, have been suffering as a result of the destabilizing accumulation of arms in their territories. That sobering situation needs to be addressed in dead earnest.

We believe that one modest way to mitigate the negative effects of conventional weapons is through the development of practical confidence-building measures. Such measures create a congenial atmosphere in which the stakeholders can enter into meaningful cooperation in carrying forward the objectives of disarmament at all levels. We share the view that dialogue, transparency and the voluntary sharing of information contribute to lessening the threats. Likewise, increased interaction as part of confidence-building measures promotes a sense of ownership, which enhances the chances for success of common initiatives. Lasting success, however, requires that the special needs of the participating countries be given due consideration.

In this context, I also wish to emphasize the importance of regional initiatives as an effective way to achieve the goals of disarmament through the consolidation of confidence-building measures at the regional level. In this context, the regional centres for peace and disarmament in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America deserve appreciation for the important work that they have accomplished in the field of disarmament in their respective regions. We are hoping that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific will become fully operational from Kathmandu following its proposed relocation from New York, as mandated by General Assembly resolutions.

In conclusion, we commend the role played by the Commission in developing practical guidelines, as mandated by the General Assembly, to assist Member States in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the current session will prove to be a milestone in setting the tone for the upcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, as well as for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament — which is long overdue — to examine the whole question of disarmament.

Mr. Aniokoye (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation joins previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at its 2007 session. We also congratulate other members of the Bureau. We would like to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation. Furthermore, we express profound appreciation to the Chairmen of the two Working Groups for having provided us with the respective working documents on each of the two agenda items. We believe that both contain material sufficient to lead our discussions to the desired consensus.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General was present at the opening meeting of the substantive session and applaud his efforts to provide added momentum to the disarmament agenda.

My delegation associates itself fully with the statements made by the ambassadors of Indonesia and of the Sudan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the African Group, respectively. I would like, however, to highlight a few additional areas of concern to my delegation.

We are gathered here at a time when the international community has witnessed a series of setbacks in various disarmament forums as a result of a lack of political will among some Member States to advance matters related to disarmament and

non-proliferation. Those failures should serve as a wake-up call to all of us. My delegation is of the firm belief that we must not continue to tread such a path but, rather, that we should all join together to reverse that trend by reaffirming our commitment to the principles and purposes of the Charter.

It is in this regard that my delegation attaches great importance to the current session of the Disarmament Commission, not only because this is the second year of the three-year cycle, in which we expect substantive discussions to commence, but also because there is an added expectation that, as this session interfaces with the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), its outcome will have an impact on the proceedings of that meeting.

On the first substantive agenda item, my delegation regards the Disarmament Commission as a unique, specialized and deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, which has contributed to the emergence of global norms and benefited the international security environment. We therefore expect this session to build on the achievements of the past by embracing multilateralism in addressing the principles and objectives of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its ramifications.

My delegation strongly believes that nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to humanity. We therefore support the effective elimination of nuclear weapons through multilateral negotiations leading to the conclusion of a convention prohibiting the development, production, testing stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons. To that end, the nuclear-weapon States must commit themselves to reversing the qualitative improvement, development, production and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and their means of delivery. We further support the establishment of a legally binding international instrument on security assurances.

The Nigerian delegation is also convinced that ownership of nuclear weapons confers a special, additional responsibility on those that possess them to build real confidence in the international community by committing themselves to a programme of nuclear disarmament.

On the issue of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, my delegation believes that such measures represent another means of strengthening international peace and security. Confidence-building creates an atmosphere conducive to negotiations on arms control and disarmament. When applied in a comprehensive manner, confidence-building measures can be conducive to achieving security based on cooperation and openness, thus contributing to the wider objective of the renunciation of the threat or use of force. To that end, implementation of the guidelines for appropriate types of confidence-building measures is significant, taking into account the prevailing political, military and other conditions.

The global arms trade has defied all efforts to address the negative consequences of conventional arms proliferation in crisis-ridden developing countries. It is therefore a matter of serious concern that developing countries account for 63.2 per cent of the value of international arms deliveries, estimated at over $1.1 trillion in 2006. We recall that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament referred to heavy military expenditure as a colossal waste of resources. The Nigerian delegation calls for a drastic reduction in military expenditure so that resources saved can be channelled to efforts to fight poverty and improve other aspects of human well-being. It is a matter of regret that the 2006 estimate of global military expenditure rose astronomically to $1.1 trillion — 2.5 per cent of world gross domestic product.

My delegation is equally concerned that the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons and their easy accessibility to non-State actors continue to threaten peace, stability and security in, and the economies of, developing countries. It is in that regard that we have consistently advocated international measures to check the proliferation of such weapons at the national, regional and international levels. We believe that the Economic Community of West African States Moratorium on the importation and exportation of such arms, which was adopted as a Convention last June, could serve as a useful instrument in that direction.

My delegation is ready to work with other delegations to ensure that by the end of this session we will have contributed to the strengthening of international peace and security.

Mr. Riedzal (Malaysia): Mr. Chairman, my delegation congratulates you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

We all are familiar with the difficulties in realizing the disarmament agenda. Previous speakers have properly reiterated the lack of progress in other disarmament-related forums. Rather than discouraging us, this should only strengthen our resolve to reinvigorate the multilateral process through the United Nations in pursuit of the aims of complete and general disarmament, in which context nuclear disarmament constitutes a primary objective.

In a matter of weeks, when the Disarmament Commission concludes its session, a new cycle to prepare for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will commence, beginning in Vienna.

My delegation hopes that the upcoming NPT Preparatory Committee will engage in substantive work. That is critical, considering the failure of the previous NPT Review Conference. Equally disturbing are reports of the development of a new, more sophisticated breed of nuclear weapons. That demonstrates not only the slow pace of progress but also the reversals that have taken place in the process of achieving nuclear disarmament, which does not bode well for the future of the NPT regime. This selective implementation of the NPT is appalling.

The lack of commitment on the part of nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their obligation to pursue and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international verification, is woeful and hardly consistent with the decision of non-nuclear-weapon States, which have voluntarily forsworn the nuclear-weapon option. In that regard, the non-nuclear-weapon States should be accorded multilateral, legally binding and unconditional assurances against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon States.

One of the best and most practical methods for dealing with the issue of negative security assurances (NSA) would be through a nuclear-weapon-free-zones treaty. In that regard, my delegation, while noting that security assurances have been provided by the nuclear-weapon States to all States parties to the treaties of Tlatelolco and of Rarotonga through their respective protocols, remains deeply concerned that not all nuclear-weapon States have signed or ratified the Protocols to the Treaty of Bangkok. My delegation also calls for all nuclear-weapon States to support the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Another inconsistency is the growing emphasis on strengthening non-proliferation regimes, particularly through the Security Council, while progress in achieving nuclear disarmament remains elusive, which is disheartening. My delegation wishes to highlight that action by the Security Council should not undermine the United Nations Charter, existing multilateral treaties on weapons of mass destruction or the international organizations established in that regard, or the role of the General Assembly.

The only way to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, including addressing the threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, is through the complete elimination of such weapons. In that regard, my delegation, as it did recently in the Conference on Disarmament, underlines the need for the Conference to commence, in the near future, multilateral negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or instrument.

The renowned Blix Commission on weapons of mass destruction in its report last year concluded that a nuclear disarmament treaty was achievable and could be reached through careful, sensible and practical measures. Benchmarks should be set, definitions agreed, timetables drawn up and agreed upon, and transparency requirements agreed. Disarmament work should be set in motion. My delegation strongly agrees with the Blix Commission that it is time to move forward from the current stalemate and revive discussions and work on nuclear disarmament.

While the primary role of the Disarmament Commission is to deliberate on specific disarmament issues and not to deliberate on treaties, any consensus reached at a Disarmament Commission session could send a positive signal to other bodies and meetings such as the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT Preparatory Committee, possibly contributing to breaking the impasse obstructing the work of those disarmament machineries.

The danger posed by conventional weapons, particularly in conflict situations, is also of concern to my delegation. The number of deaths and injuries inflicted by conventional weapons is staggering, qualifying them as de facto weapons of mass destruction.

In that regard, confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons which are voluntarily implemented could contribute to strengthening international and regional peace and security. In line with this, Malaysia completed the destruction of its stockpile of anti-personnel landmines on 23 January 2001 and accordingly has fulfilled its obligations under article 4 of the Ottawa Convention.

My delegation considers the working paper circulated by the Chairman of Working Group II as a good basis for our discussion.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): The United Republic of Tanzania wishes to congratulate you, Ambassador Rosselli, and, through you, the other members of the Bureau, on your election to chair this important session of the Disarmament Commission. We have no doubt that under your wise guidance and leadership, the Commission this year will have fruitful discussions and be able to chart some practical recommendations on how conventional nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation can together be achieved progressively, today and in future, in this globalized world.

Allow me to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Joon Oh of the Republic of Korea, for his remarkable contributions to that end. We wish also to express our profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for his enlightening keynote address yesterday.

Furthermore, we would like to associate ourselves with the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group statements, which were delivered by the representatives of Indonesia and of the Sudan, respectively.

My delegation has noted that, in general, there is a prevailing political will and commitment from Member States to learn from the experience gained so far and from the setbacks encountered to date by the Commission, in order to move the process forward despite the failures of the two Review Conferences — one on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2005 and the other on small arms, in 2006.

There is also a strong recognition by members of the continuing vital role of the Commission as a viable multilateral deliberating body dealing with disarmament and non-proliferation problems. This is a great source of encouragement and cause for further dedication to the process. A candid assessment of the root causes of the setbacks largely points, on one hand, to the political and security-related sensitivity and complexity of the subject matter in question and, on the other hand, to the inherent weaknesses deeply embedded in the multilateral arms control process.

The difficulties encountered should not be an excuse for complacency but should be seen as challenges to be addressed. Achieving full and complete disarmament should remain our determined goal, major focus and ultimate achievement. In fact, disarmament and non-proliferation are moral and ethical requirements, to be underpinned by legal obligations, if we are to ensure the survival of the human species and the future of planet Earth, with its already fragile ecology. We strongly believe that it is not only the threat of accidental nuclear detonation but also the incomprehensible logic of the nuclear arms race and nuclear proliferation that will determine the fate of humankind. We have a chance to arrest the progression of that logic by rededicating ourselves to the mission and work of this Commission.

We agree with previous speakers who have insisted that although all of us bear responsibility for, and have an important role to play towards, the implementation of the two objectives of advancing disarmament and non-proliferation, the primary responsibility for putting in place an effective, non-discriminatory control regime that goes hand in hand with other universally agreed global values, in the final analysis, lies with the nuclear States and those aspiring to join the nuclear arms club.

In this context, we should recall that the NPT came about after difficult bargaining and compromise between nuclear States and non-nuclear States, with the condition that the former agreed to negotiate the elimination of their weapons and share technology for peaceful purposes in return. It would appear that unless and until nuclear States demonstrate their readiness to allow transparent verification, compliance and enforcement measures, the effectiveness of the NPT

will remain doubtful and, in the long run, will frustrate the work and future achievements of the Commission.

It is therefore our appeal that the ongoing gradual erosion of general confidence in various existing treaty regimes should be arrested and that every effort be urgently taken to improve the regimes and enhance political commitment. The increasing demand for more rigorous regimes is dictated by changing security circumstances and evolving threats which demand more rigorous adherence to such multilateral agreements. The work of the Commission is therefore more necessary today than ever before, given the increasing terrorist threats emanating from some radical non-State actors.

Regarding the conventional aspect of the problem, the Great Lakes region of Africa, to which my country belongs, concluded last December a regional Pact on Peace, Security and Development. In the Pact, the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a major component. Tanzania upholds the NPT and its 13 practical steps. It is a party to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a signatory to an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Additional Protocol. Regrettably, however, until now, the CTBT still lacks sufficient ratifications to allow it to become fully operational. We appeal to those Members that have not yet signed or ratified it to do so. Their signatures are long overdue. We believe that differences among Member States regarding interpretation are not beyond compromise, and that a consensus can be reached. Here, again, we urge nuclear Powers to exercise leadership while we collectively muster the necessary political will and occupy the moral high ground.

Regional nuclear-free zone agreements such as the Pelindaba Treaty, Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, the Treaty of Tlatelolco in Latin America and the Rarotonga Treaty in the South Pacific play a crucial role in line with the Commission's consensus conclusion of 1999 on guidelines for establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and for encouraging conventional arms control.

We consider these treaties to be important measures towards the strengthening of global non-proliferation efforts and wish to commend the five Central Asian countries for signing the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone at Semipalatinsk on 8 September 2006.

In the context of conventional arms, we share the view that, on the disarmament agenda, greater emphasis should be put on the illicit arms trade and its devastating human security consequences, especially in Africa, where small arms and light weapons are in effect weapons of mass destruction. Their ease of use and the ease with which they can spread exacerbate insurgencies, civil conflicts and ethnic and regional conflicts. The adoption in 2001 of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was very welcome and highly appreciated. The same applies to the United Nations Firearms Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which entered into force in 2005.

Therefore, in conclusion, my delegation calls for further political commitment from all members and for the Commission's improvement of all regimes in place, including a thorough follow-up conference to the Programme of Action, as a significant step to ensure full implementation of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes. We are ready to contribute, to support you, Mr. Chairman, and to cooperate with other members in order to ensure the success of the third year of the cycle of the Disarmament Commission's deliberations in 2008.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Let me first of all congratulate you, Sir, upon your election to chair the Disarmament Commission for 2007. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the two Working Groups. My delegation is convinced that your experience and skills will produce the positive results that we hope for at this session.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the States Members of the Non-Aligned Movement and the statement made by the representative of the Sudan on behalf of the African Group.

My delegation would briefly like to stress a few points on the two substantive items on our agenda.

There is still an urgent need to ensure balance and to avoid selectivity in the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), so as to break the impasse in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The current impasse in the disarmament machinery cannot be explained by anything related to its effectiveness, or lack thereof. It can only be explained by the lack of political will to make progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. My country demonstrated this when on 19 December 2003 we proclaimed our historic choice to eliminate all equipment and programmes that could result in the production of internationally prohibited weapons. This initiative, which brought us praise and congratulations from all members of the international community, was based on our conviction that the arms race could not serve our security or regional security and contradicted our desire to see the world enjoy peace and security.

My country thought that its initiative would serve as a catalyst to spur other countries to follow our example, beginning with the Middle East and without exception. We also believed that our decision would serve our national security only if a number of major concerns were addressed. On a number of occasions the international community has stated those concerns in resolutions and instruments that talk about the need for settling these issues.

Among those concerns, I would like to note, first, the need for non-selective and comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in particular those of article VI as they relate to nuclear disarmament and of article IV as they relate to facilitating — not restricting — the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We also stress the need for respect for the principles set out in the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-10/2), the outcome of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference, with particular reference to the 13 practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement article VI of the Treaty. Here, my delegation stresses that any progress towards nuclear disarmament will help enhance international security through non-proliferation.

The second concern relates to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all parts of the world. I would draw attention to the fact that, despite all the efforts that the international community has made to transform the Middle East into a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, Israel's possession of military nuclear reactors and hundreds of nuclear warheads poses a grave threat not only to regional but also to international peace and security. Needless to say, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that continues to refuse to join the NPT, even though its accession would strengthen the Treaty's universality and defuse the tense situation in the region.

The third relates to the need to put in place the necessary guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States through an unconditional, legally binding international instrument that would ease the concerns raised by the failure of nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their commitments with respect to the total elimination of these weapons.

Fourthly, we must work towards the speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) through signing and ratification by countries that have not yet done so, especially those listed in annex 2 of the Treaty. In our view, those countries should act as quickly as possible, because the CTBT, if implemented, would be a step forward in the field of nuclear non-proliferation.

Turning to the agenda item entitled "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons", my delegation stresses the importance of adopting effective measures that would help strengthen international peace and security while respecting the principles of the right of States to possess the weapons they need for self-defence, State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Such measures must also respect the specific characteristics and the particular security and defence requirements of each region.

With respect to the issue of transparency and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, my delegation remains convinced that the Register's methodology continues to be selective and lacking in balance, because it does not cover all types of weapons, including some that are weapons of mass destruction, or all aspects of a nation's capacity to produce, possess and stockpile arms.

My delegation wishes in conclusion to reaffirm its commitment to the objectives of the Disarmament Commission. We hope to see constructive participation in this substantive session so that members can reach consensus and formulate serious, concrete recommendations on the two substantive items on our agenda. We assure you, Mr. Chairman, of our entire

readiness to cooperate with a view to attaining the goals we have identified for the session.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I call now on those representatives who wish to make statements in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I would like to address Iran's intentionally misleading and blatantly false statements regarding the strong United States record of compliance with its disarmament obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The various and extensive steps taken by the United States in these regards are matters of public record, but they are nonetheless worth summarizing here.

Since the end of the cold war, the United States has made extraordinary progress in reducing the size of its once vast nuclear weapons stockpile. It has dismantled more than 13,000 nuclear weapons since 1988, dismantled more than 3,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons, reduced non-strategic weapons deployed in support of NATO in Europe by 90 per cent, removed all non-strategic nuclear weapons from surface ships and naval aircraft, and withdrawn from Europe and retired all nuclear artillery shells, Lance missile warheads and naval nuclear depth bombs. The United States is now in the process of drawing down its operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by the year 2012.

In parallel with reductions in warhead numbers, the United States has been reducing its nuclear delivery systems. Since the cold war's end, the United States has cancelled the modern, highly sophisticated Midgetman missile, halted production of other major weapons systems, such as the B-2 stealth bomber, taken out of nuclear weapon service four Ohio-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines and removed the B-1 Lancer bomber from strategic service. To date, in fact, the United States has eliminated more than 1,000 strategic missiles and bombers and 450 silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles.

These reductions have been a continuing priority for the current Bush Administration. The final MX Peacekeeper missile, the last of 50, was deactivated in September 2005, and the United States recently announced that it would eliminate about 400 advanced cruise missiles currently deployed with the B-52 bomber fleet.

The United States has not enriched uranium for nuclear weapons purposes since 1964 and has produced no plutonium for nuclear weapons since 1988. Since 1992, moreover, it has scrupulously observed a declared moratorium on nuclear testing and hopes to develop its capabilities to the point where it can be assured that such testing will not be needed. The United States is also a staunch advocate of a treaty to ban any further production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive purposes. Indeed, in May 2006, the United States became the first and, so far, the only nation to introduce a draft fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

The United States is also moving to reduce its reliance upon nuclear weapons in its military doctrine. As announced in the Nuclear Posture Review of 2001, the United States is moving away from the cold war nuclear triad as the cornerstone of its strategic posture. Pursuant to this plan, strategic deterrence no longer relies exclusively upon nuclear weapons. Instead, to maintain an enhanced deterrence, the United States relies upon a combination of nuclear and non-nuclear offensive strike capabilities, defences, including ballistic missile defences, and a robust and responsive defence industrial infrastructure.

The United States and Russia have also taken many bilateral steps that support achieving the goals of the preamble and article VI of the NPT, by helping Russia move away from its cold war nuclear posture. Agreements between the United States and Russia facilitate the shutdown of Russia's last three plutonium production reactors by replacing them with fossil fuel plants. Moreover, the United States is provided funding to redirect the efforts of over 60,000 former Soviet weapons scientists to peaceful commercial work. The United States has also been helping Russia to reduce the size of and increase security within its nuclear weapons complex.

The United States and Russia are currently engaged in a broad-ranging strategic security dialogue designed, among other things, to work out the nature of their strategic relationship after the expiration of the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) in 2009. This dialogue began in September 2006 between former senior officials in the United States and the Russian Federation.

I have highlighted some of the substantial United States disarmament efforts over the past several decades. We will circulate a more complete presentation of United States progress in due course. We are proud of our record on compliance and are eager to discuss it and engage in an honest dialogue. However, for that dialogue to be fruitful, Member States must not engage in intentional efforts to distort the facts.

I will not dignify the rest of the comments and assertions Iran has made other than to reject them.

Mr. Sin Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to say a few words on the remarks made by the Australian delegation with regard to our nuclear test and the Six-Party Talks for the better comprehension of all the delegations gathered in this room.

The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is a direct product of the hostile policy of the United States towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Bush Administration has designated the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a part of the "axis of evil" and as an "outpost of tyranny", and has threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike. In these compelling circumstances, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no choice but to make nuclear weapons to counter the constant threat of nuclear attack by the United States. Last October, it successfully carried out nuclear tests. This is a reasonable exercise of the sovereign right to defend our territory, population and social system from foreign attack and invasion.

The resolution of the nuclear issue depends entirely on the attitude of the United States. The agreement of 13 February was possible only because the United States promised to lift financial sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea within 30 days. However, the money has not reached our hands, although the United States declared that it had lifted the sanctions.

It is not simply a question of money; it is, rather, a question of credibility. Having cited these parts of the official statement delivered by our Permanent Representative this morning, we would like to conclude with the following remarks. The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is of the view that if Australia sincerely wishes the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it should, before anything else, exercise its influence over the United States, which is its ally, to fully and faithfully implement its obligations under the agreed principle of action for action.

The Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Having come to the end of our speaker's list, we have completed the general exchange of views.

The Working Groups will begin their deliberations tomorrow morning. I would like to wish all members every success in their work, under the guidance of my colleagues, the Chairmen of the Groups.

The meeting rose at 4:30 p.m.